A qualitative study on the important elements for an effective dietetic consultation from patients’ and dietitians’ point of views.

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Introduction
The level of patients’ compliance with dietetic advice remains poor. Little is studied about how dietitians communicate with individual patient in the process of nutrition consultation.

Objectives
The aim of the study is to examine the gaps in expectations between practitioners’ and patients’ on how the consultation should be conducted in order to develop an appropriate consultation approach to improve patients’ compliance with nutrition treatment.

Methodology
A qualitative semi-structured interview study using constant comparison method was adopted. Ten obese patients who attended dietetic outpatient services and ten practicing dietitians (working in hospital, community or private setting) participated in semi-structured interviews that focused on (i) experiences in consultations; (ii) role of a dietitian in consultation; and (iii) facilitators and barriers to change. Participants’ views were transcribed, grouped and coded using content analysis.

Result
All patients considered the three core conditions: genuineness, unconditional positive regard and empathy (Rogers, 1951) were important to facilitate therapeutic changes. In contrast, dietitians considered influence on patients was derived primarily from professional authority and presentation of information. The study showed that patients and dietitians had different perceptions on effective consultations. Findings highlighted the need for dietitians to recognize the social and psychological implications of dietary changes to patients in order to move toward a patient-centered approach for delivering a dietetic consultation.